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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE



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# Developments in Indochina



State Dept. review completed

DIA review(s) completed.

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**Top Secret** 

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	DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA (Information as of 1500)	
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	Saigon is trying to negotiate a truce at Tonle Cham. The US consul in Da Nang has assessed the military situation in MR-1 two months after the cease-fire: the current battle lines in Quang Tri seem fairly stab but there is apt to be considerable sparri in the southern half of the region in the few months. The Viet Cong head of the Fou Party Joint Commission will stay on as head of the new two-party commission.	le, ng next r
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	Pheng Phongsavan is back at the negotiatin table with some political demands that are negotiable, but the Communists are now insisting that military problems have to b worked out before the political agreements can be implemented. The Chinese are extending a road in northwest Laos to the Burma border. Communist public protests o the government presence near Tha Viang may be a way of setting the stage for military attacks in the area.	e f
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Reserves of some fuel are running low in Phnom Penh and resupply is complicated by insurgent control of about 20 miles of the Mekong south of the capital. Lon Nol is reportedly considering a new high-level ouncil, but none of the opposition candidates wants to serve. B-52 strikes have reportedly destroyed some insurgent supply concentrations.

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#### SOUTH VIETNAM

#### The Military Situation

Fighting remains generally light, but the Communists are still attacking the Tonle Cham ranger camp in northern Tay Ninh Province, and action has increased in the northern delta near the border entry point of Hong Ngu. Press reports say the South Vietnamese will boycott the Two-Party Joint Military Commission in Saigon until the Communists agree to a truce at Tonle Cham. Earlier, General Minh, the government commander for the area, proposed a faceto-face meeting with Communist commanders to discuss an end to the Tanle Cham fighting. So far, the Communists have not responded to Minh's proposal.

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#### MR-1 At X+60

The US consul general in Da Nang reports that after the first two months of the cease-fire, the level of military activity in MR-1 is down noticeably, but there is a strong possibility that heavy fighting could again break out.

Neither side has improved its military position appreciably since the cease-fire began, according to the consul general's assessment. The Communists appear content with the current battle lines in Quang Tri Province, but they are less satisfied with their position in Thua Thien. They may be expected to defend vigorously the areas they currently control, and they probably will keep up a low-level of action west of Hue in an effort to improve their access to the coastal lowlands. In southern MR-1, neither side appears content with the current alignment and in these provinces sparring for better positions will continue. General Truong, the South Vietnamese

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commander in MR-1, apparently has made a genuine effort to reduce government military operations since ordered to do so by President Thieu in early March.

Assessing the performance of the various international supervisory teams, the consul general concludes that, with one outstanding exception, they have not performed well. The exception was the unanimous report from the ICCS which placed the blame on the Communists for initiating attacks against the coastal village of Sa Huynh in Quang Ngai Province—the only instance when the Polish and Hungarian delegates joined in a decision that went against their Vietnamese Communist allies.

As a result of that report, the Polish delegation chief has been recalled from Da Nang and the Communist bloc representatives have refused to participate in any investigation that might again embarrass the Viet Cong or the North Vietnamese.

On the political side, according to the consul general, the government has strong, popular antipathy for the Communists going for it, but has done little to generate support for its administration since the cease-fire. Saigon politicians have pushed Democracy Party recruitment instead of actions to promote grass-roots support. For their part, the Communists have not measurably increased their strength among the population, and any improvement in their political position will depend about equally on the effectiveness of their local military efforts and errors of the South Vietnamese Government.

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#### Tra Stays On

General Tran Van Tra, who headed the Viet Cong delegation to the just-terminated Four-Party Joint Military Commission, will also be chief of the PRG

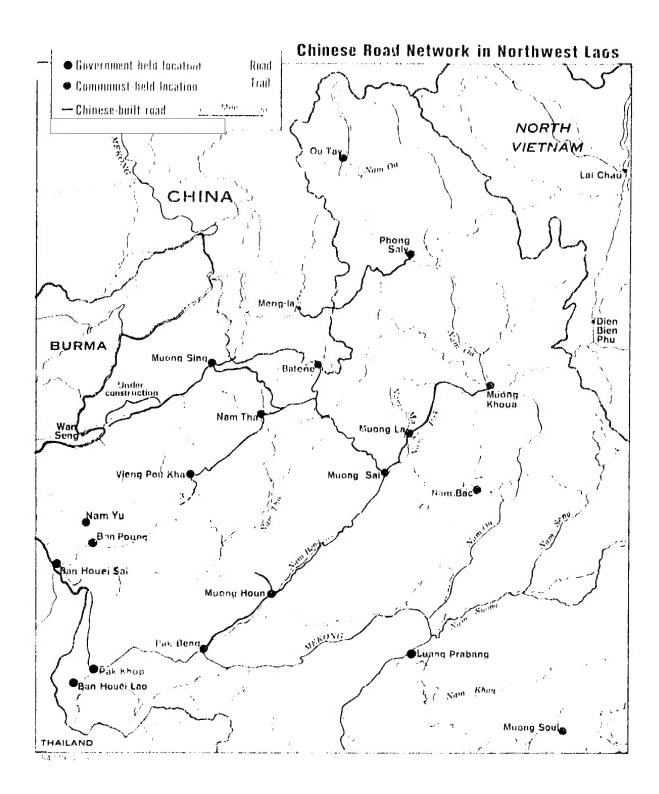
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team on the two-party body. Hoang Anh Tuan will apparently be deputy chief.
Tra is an authoritative Viet Cong figure who outranked his North Vietnamese colleague on the four-party commission. The US ambassy comments that Tra will outclass his counterpart from Saigon,
Pham Quoc Thuan,

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## LAOS

#### Vientiane Less Optimistic

After two meetings with Pathet Lao negotiators and a careful study of the Communist proposal submitted late last week, the government is now much less optimistic about the prospects for the formation of a new government in the near future. Souvanna's negotiator, Pheng Phongsavan, says it is unlikely that a new government could be formed by the prime minister's self-imposed deadline of 15 April. Pheng claims that differences on the composition of the new coalition could easily be worked out, but that the Communists are now insisting that the implementation of the political features of the Lao peace agreement must await agreement on military matters.

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### Chinese Road Construction

Chinese construction crews in extreme north-western Laos have reached the Mekong River at the Burmese border. According to field photography, an old logging road, Route 322, has been repaired and cleared from the Chinese border

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southwest to the Mekong where the river forms the Lao-Burmese border. The road is motorable to within at least eight miles of the river. No government forces are in this area, but there are signs of growing Burmese Communist activity in the adjacent Shan State of Burma. The Chinese are still working on Route 3 leading southwest from the Pathet Lao administrative center at Nam Tha toward Ban Houei Sai, a government-held town on the Mekong. Construction on Route 3 has not advanced since mid-March and is still 23 miles from a connection with a spur road leading to Ban Houei Sai. The first Chinese road to the Mekong still terminates at Pak Beng.

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#### Justification in Advance

The Communists may be setting the stage for increased military activity. On 2 April they broadcast their strongest protest to date against alleged government and US cease-fire violations. The statement alleged that in addition to flying reconnaissance missions, US aircraft--including some with Lao markings--have bombed Communist positions. The broadcast also claimed that government ground forces near Tha Viang and south of Thakhek have encroached into areas under Communist control at the time of the cease-fire and said Communist units will "exercise their right to self defense" to "punish violators of the agreement."

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#### CAMBODIA

#### Possible Petroleum Crisis

The capital's reserves of gas and diesel fuel are almost exhausted. Unless stringent rationing measures are enforced and the Mekong River corridor is reopened soon to supply convoys, the city could be out of petroleum by week's end.

The last regular supply convoy to reach Phnom Fenh from South Vietnam as ived on 20 March. next convoy could not arr before 6 April, and then only if the Cambodian Army regains control over the river's banks.

Khmer insurgents control about 20 miles of the river between Phnom Penh and the government base at Neak Luong. Elements of three -- and possibly four -insurgent regiments are known to be in the area. government has assigned two infantry brigades and several paratroop battalions from Phnom Penh's general reserves to sweep operations along the lower end of Route 1 between Phnom Penh and Neak Luong, and along These demoralized units have shown little the Mekong. taste for combat, however, and thus far have made no progress. Army Chief of Staff Fernandez is reluctant to reinforce them from his dwindling reserve for fear of causing territorial losses elsewhere.

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#### Cool on a Council

Lon Nol has been reviewing a proposal for a four-man "council of the republic," which would in

effect run the country

The proposal calls for Lon Nol to head the council, supported by former Democratic Party leader In Tam, former chief of state Cheng Heng, and Sirik Matak Neither In Tam nor Cheng Heng has shown much interest in the project.

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B-52 Strike Resulto  The US defense attache in Physics Popular reports	
The US defense attache in Phnom Penh reports that B-52 strikes targeted against enemy logistics bases and troop concentrations since 7 March have resulted in 376 observed secondary explosions. The explosions indicate that large amounts of supplies may have been destroyed, most of which probably were for the Khmer insurgents. Thus far, there has been little collateral information on the effectiveness	
of the strikes.	25X1

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